000 even met by a sergeant with soldiers (Plate XLII). This time the city of Dankar put at my disposal the amban gung kwan, that is, the hotel of the governor of Northeast Tibet, and scarcely had I arrived there when the ting and the sie tai called on me and apologized profusely, also in the name of the amban for the attack on me and straightway blamed the hsiē dia who had most carelessly sent a very inferior employee of theirs along with me, who, they said, knew nothing at all about how to deal with Tibetans. /205/ I was assured that the hsiē dia would quickly adjust the matter and return everything I had lost. I heard various answers to my question as to who the robbers could have been. It seemed that there was still uncertainty on that point.

On January 22 I was again back in Hsining fu. For the journey from Dankar to Hsining fu I was given an escort consisting of ten armed horsemen. Meanwhile, in Hsining fu where my large baggage was stored, the instruments from Europe had arrived which were to replace those that had been stolen at Hu peh. They were now more than welcome, for in the Koko Nor attack I had lost a few more of the reserve instruments. Through the kind intervention of the consul general of Shanghai the new supplies had, after many delays, been sent to this remote corner of the earth where at that time no one knew anything about mail. I was less fortunate in Hsining fu with my cook Liu. A day after my return, after he had heard me say that I would again travel into Tibet, he disappeared in the night without a word and also without asking for his back pay and the travel money still due him. Later Father van Dyk told me that he appeared in Lanchow fu as though he were still being chased by robbers and there told, still completely horrified, of the dreadful cold at Lake Koko Nor. The poor fellow was completely beside himself as a result of the night of terror and the Tibetans at his throat.

527 On January 25 the Chinese New Year began, and this, as is
426 well-known, is the only Chinese holiday on which all businesses
454 are closed. Thus, everyone had to get his entire supplies for a week on the preceding days. But I had difficulty in getting assistance from my Hsining men and even in catching a glimpse of them. Like the rest of the inhabitants of the city, they, too, were busy all day cashing in old debts and paying their own. By far the greatest number of Chinese do not own a penny of savings, to say nothing of capital, and so almost everyone in the course of the year runs out of cash at some point and is obliged to borrow.

However, it is an ancient custom that debts must be paid the last day of the year. Now, any half-way decent object owned by a Chinese family must serve to plug up the old gaps on these last days of the year. Thus, many heads of families came to me also, and offered me for sale all kinds of curios and things, in fact, some of them brought their creditors and the creditors of their creditors along and hardly had I bought a thing when they began subtracting among themselves. For days the pawn shops of the city were crowded with customers until midnight. Lucky the man who has plenty of cash on New Year's Day in China! 527 426 454

On New Year's eve the city was surprisingly quiet. The city is too poor for the noisy demonstrations that take place annually in Shanghai and other coastal cities. Large firecrackers went off rather seldom. Toward morning one heard a few more petards, because on New Year's eve all ghosts are on the loose. Only the pawn shops were continually busy. Far into the night one could see Chinese loitering about outside them, many a one defended himself with his fists against an all-too obstinate creditor who was on the point of forcing him on that bitter-cold winter's night /206/ "to sell the shirt on his back." 527 426

Many of the pawnshop customers, after they had paid their debts or collected the necessary cash, immediately wanted to redeem their gala clothes for the forthcoming holidays, even at that late hour.

In the inn which I occupied there lived a large Chinese family diagonally across from me, who made such a racket all during the night of New Year's eve that I did not sleep a wink. Half a dozen creditors had gradually assembled there, all of whom demanded to be paid. The man quietly explained to each one in turn that he was unable to pay at the moment but that he would do so within the next few months. None of the creditors was satisfied with this. After the first eloquent remonstrances, each one of them let his glance travel over useful objects in the dwelling and then suddenly demanded this or that object as a deposit or substitute. But it was not easy for any of them to obtain anything. For hours the parties wrangled over things until the head of the house finally gave in. Early the next morning the entire apartment was cleaned out, even their blankets were gone and the private bailiffs had even torn the wife's jacket off her body. The spectacle was pitiful. But when day dawned, when no more creditors could be expected, when all were congratulating one another with "gung schi!" "gung schi!", 426